

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

May 9, 2005

LB 312

impression that they were amenable to, if we could get the language written, to considering adding health benefits as a portion of the bill, that would be included with an incentive. And, as many of us do, I read the paper in Omaha on the weekend, but I didn't read the Lincoln Journal Star until the clips were given to me, and I was really struck by the article in yesterday's paper in Lincoln, the title "Survey: Two of Three Uninsured Work," and this is a report from the director of the Nebraska Center for Rural Health Research at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. And some of this is kind of dry and it's statistical, like what you're been hearing, that Nebraska has a lower percentage of people who get their insurance through their employer than nationally, and a higher percentage of those who purchase private insurance. But sometimes one story is worth all the statistics that we can read. Last week we got into quite a discussion over adding...over our budget bill. And we have added, of course, to Medicaid; we've added to our clinics for the uninsured. We keep putting money into this. But I think this story really tells it all, and this is an anonymous rural Hispanic female: Last year I was pregnant and I lost my twin babies. But I went to the private clinic and they asked me if I had insurance. Because I didn't have it, they couldn't take care of me. They said I had to wait until it was an emergency. I waited for two days, holding in the pain. When I went to Kearney for care, it was too late. I had already lost my babies. If I had medical assistance when I needed it, I would not have lost my babies. And I apologize for getting a little emotional about this, but whenever we're looking at policy, whether it be this policy we're talking about today, what we spend our budget on, how we prioritize, we need to look at good public policy. A lot of the discussion today stemmed around how much it costs us to subsidize jobs that don't pay a high enough wage and don't have a benefit associated with it for healthcare. I think if we move this bill forward, we need to look seriously at incenting business to provide health insurance, and to provide it so that people, and their employees who work for them, can afford it, not some token thing that takes half their paycheck, as this article talked about as one of the reasons people don't even use the employer-based health insurance. So we should have as part...if we're going to look at the things that attract business to this state, we need to